critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
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This Week

Guys and Dolls- City Center 4/20. NYC Light Opera Company first program with Helen Gallagher, Walter Matthau, Tom Pedi.

Inherit the Wind-National 4/21. Herman Shumlin presents new play by Jerome Lawrence-Robert Lee based on Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. With Paul Muni, Ed Begley, Tony Randall.

Phoenix '55-Phoenix 4/23 Hambleton-Houghton present revue with Nancy Walker Harvey Lembeck, Portia Nelson.

Future Dates

The Honeys-Longacre 4/28 ...South Pacfic -City Center 5/4...Damn Yankee-46th St-5/5...Once Upon a Tailor-5/16...Finian's Rainbow-City Center 5/18...Seventh Heaven -ANTA 5/26...Pleasure Dome-5/27...Almost Crazy-Bijou-6/1.

Tryout Dates

Seventh Heaven-Philadelphia 4/26. Boston 5/10.

Summer Issues of "C.D."

Summer Issues of C.D will cover tryouts of new plays in Eastern summer theatres as reported in local dailies, trade journals and via personal inspection. Plus other features.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Champagne Complex- Cort 4/12. Only News and Journal American aisle sitters thought Leslie Stevens new 3 character comedy funny enough to recommend. Chapman, News, admitted it was a thin ping from the old sex triangle, but he found it quite pleasant and well played. McClain, Journal American, predicts playgoer will be amused at the suitable vehicle which provides a lot of fun. Majority thought play with Polly Bergen, John Dall and Donald Cook contained some clever lines, but not enough meat for an entire evening. Thin farce in which the champagne tastes flat, sums up Atkinson, Times. Kerr, Herald Tribune, loved Donald Cook's antics, but did not think much of play. Coleman, Mirror, still thinks author Stevens has the talent to do big things on Broadway, and marks off this script to experience. Watts, Post, agrees that it is fun to watch Cook in action, but thought play only intermittent fun. A one gag play, pans Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun.

Meet the People-Cafe Theatre 4/13. One of the nicest things that has happened to Broadway this season, applauded Hawkins, WT&S, for the material, the young performers and the whole idea. Earl Hall, Johnny Haymer and Patricia Wilson were singled out for praise. Pleasant night club revue, but certainly not theatre, concluded McClain, Journal American. Rest of critics were not so kind. They panned dinner service, material and performers, in the order named. Studiously hackneyed, noted Atkinson, Times, who complained he had to try to see the show through skulls of several critics and actresses. Show does not keep pace with either night club or Broadway standards, filed Herald Tribune reviewer(unsigned.) Chaos is the word picked by Watts, Post, to describe the problem of getting the audience in the theatre and to their seats. But discounting this sad fact, critic concluded show was modest, easygoing, youthful, likeable, intimate revue

Hits Revisited

After a year on Broadway Pajama Game remains smash entertainment, raves Hobe, Variety. Show seems to mugg every bit as whamo a musical as it did opening night. He thought Janis Paige actually had improved.

NYC Drama Critics' Circle Awards were won by Cat on a Hot Tin Roof as Best new American play, Witness for the Prosecution as best new foreign play, and The Saint of Bleecker Street as best new musical new musical. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof won by a mere one vote over Bus Stop. Critics who voted for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof include reviewers of Brooklyn Eagle, Newsweek, Cue, Post, Times, Women's Wear, New Yorker and Saturday Review.

Plays

Once Upon a Tailor resumes rehearsals and now plays for May 16 NY debut...Adams-Neeba plan Shaw's The Apple Cart for fall ...archy and mehitabel to be presented as musical with Carol Haney by Selden-Gottlieb-Awe...Seven Year Itch passed 1000th perfomance.

Players

Haila Stoddard will replace Mary Anderson in Lunatics and Lovers April 25. Dennis King leaves same show May 7...Lawrence Brooks subbed for Don Ameche for several performances of Silk Stockings, star suffered virus ailment...Andrew Duggan subbed for MacDonald Carey in Anniversary Waltz, while star in Hollywood making TV pilot film...Frank Corsaro taken over director chores of The Honeys...Cathleen Nesbett will replace Eugenia Leontovich in Anastasia during summer...Andy Griffith signed for lead in No Time for Sergeants due in NY Oct 20.

Other Broadways

Julius Caesar will open Conn. American Festival Shakespeare and Academy season...Dark is Light Enough will open in Boston April 25...Twelfth Night will open Stratford-on-Avon-England Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

Theatre Vaudeville Notes

Palace bill headed by Mr. Ballantine and includes Marstell & Mignon, Bobby Joyce, George Kirby, Wilfred Mae Trio, Joe Maize.

Theatre Burlesque Notes

Third hearing on application of T. J. Phillips for a license to offer a burlesque show at Orpheum Theatre, Brooklyn, ended once again with License Commissioner McCaffrey reserving decision. New York Civil Liberties Union man spoke in favor of the application, while representative of Coordinating Council of Catholic Lay Organizations spoke against it.

Theatre Film Notes

Kim Novak and Susan Strasberg were signed for leading roles in Columbia's "Picnic"... Mel Ferrer and Audrey Hepburn will starin Ponti-Laurentis version of "War and Peace."

Theatre TV-Radio Notes

3 part TV version of Hamlet is being presented Sundays at 11 30 AM on CBS TV Camera Three series starring Earle Hyman. Others in cast include Nancy Wickwire, Michael Kane, Gerald Sarracini and Michael Higgins. Concludes May 1. ...Ten full length Shakespeare plays will be heard via recordings on WNYC during week...NOR TV, NY, showing Orson Welles Macbeth film nightly ...WQXR presenting full day April 23 musical tribute to Shakespeare on his Birthday...Lee J Cobb replaces Claude Rains in May 2 NBC TV "Darkness at Noon". Harry Sosnik to compose original score for TV version of "Darkness at Noon"... Thunder Rock was presented on ABC TV Pond Theatre...Maurice Schwartz made his TV debut on CBS TV "Lamp Unto My Feet.

Theatre Book Notes

"Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama" by W David Sievers published by Hermitage House..."Theatrical Companion to Shaw" by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson published by Pitman..."Plays for Living and Learning" by Helen Louise Miller published by Plays, Incorp.

CRITICAL DIGEST- weekly digests NYC show news, reviews, comments from 50 publications. Tickets, critics reports. Covers NY shows, drama books, drama records, theatre on TV. Also west coast theatre briefs. Special summer features. Perfect gift 52 weeks per year for "stage struck" friends, business acquaintances, etc.

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AUDIENCE ROLE...The success of any individual performance in the theatre is measured by the audience sitting out front, reminds "Stage." Keenly sensitive to atmosphere, the actor is soon aware if his performance either going down well or missing the mark. Restlessness in the house is quickly registered on the other side of the footlights, and the experienced player can do something on the spot to pull a scene together, continues British trade journal editorial.

COLUMN TIPS...How come the Saturday Review has two votes at NY Drama Critics' Circle, asks Winchell...Julie Wilson may win lead in Pygmalion musical, hears Walker...Seventh Heaven lead Ricardo Montalban will be Broadway's newest matinee idol, bets Farrell.

WILLIAMS LANGUAGE...While France has its Jean-Paul Sartre, who made his reputation by presenting the most revolting aspects of human life, US has Tennessee Williams, vetoed NBC Leon Pearson...McClain, Journal American, wishes author of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof would write about less mixed up people....While Chapman, News, is glad to hear the "elephant story" was taken out of "Cat", because he thinks this will strengthen the play.

DRAMA DESK MAIL...M. Eleanor Fitzgerald of Provincetown Theatre was remembered in three tributes to Times Mailbag, including notes from E.E. Cummings and Kenneth Macgowan. Former called her the incarnation of a mystery, the mystery of individuality....Fuss about burlesque license for Brooklyn house confuses a "C.D." reader who is convinced that many acts currently on Broadway are straight out of burlesque field.

SUMMER PROBLEMS....The worm is turning against high priced package shows in the summer theatre field, gladly reports Coleman, Mirror. Producers who started in business to help discover and train talented people couldn't afford to in the competition for high priced stars. Now the manager of the Boothbay and X Deertree Maine Playhouses have worked a method to restore sanity and balance to the summer theatre. They are booking nothing but little theatre groups, and in so doing are getting back to basic principles. Many a straw-hat rival is going to beat a path to the doors of these experimental show-shops, critic bets.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS....Watts, Post, would like to see Hiram Sherman, currently in 3 for Tonight, in a comedy worthy of his humorous gifts...Chapman, News, is dismayed at every theatre price hike because it means fewer customers, fewer theatres and fewer shows. New prices for 3 incoming musicals are $8.05, $8.35 and $6.90.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...All in One is general working title of plan producers Charles Bowden and Richard Barr have worked out. They will sign stars for short periods to do they rarely, if ever, get a chance to do. Among items lined up in their portfolio are a play to be directed by Lynn Fontanne, a new play by William Inge for Ina Claire, a variety turn by Judy Holiday, and the debut of Marlene Dietrich to the NY stage, they told Peper, WT&S. ...Burl Ives confesses he has never seen Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, thus he dodged Williams Post, question on what the Williams play is about. But he did tell reporter that he does 15 minutes roadwork prior to each show.

"Pros & Cons by T.M.K."

Off Broadway has grown up in the 1954-55 season. Established groups have been set up, awards have gone to performers from Off Broadway shows, and theatre fans no longer get lost trying to find some of the downtown showcases. At this time it might be wise for all concerned in the Off Broadway movement to look again at their aims. If they are trying to present something new/and or different from Broadway, their are justifying their existence. If they are only trying to hire actors at cheap rates, they should be discouraged.

There must be at least a half a dozen theatre goers per night who rush out of the theatre prior to the final curtain. If they are rushing for a train, trying to grab the first cab, or if they are just compulsive runners will probably never be known. But it is known that they are rude to fellow playgoers and actors. Also it may be wondered if this group never has any questions as to how a given play ended.

BROADWAY

Circle in the Square producers Ted Mann and Jose Quintero are planning to reopen their theatre at its original site, 5 Sheridan Square. Improvements are being made to meet the fire laws and they are awaiting a license clearance to produce a new play, The King and the Duke by Francis Ferguson.

Margaret Bannerman subbing for Gerry Fleming for 2 weeks in Thieves Carnival... Almost Crazy revue with Mae Barnes will open at Bijou in June instead of Theatre De Lys ...Showcase Theatre Preview Club formed by Sylvia Leigh and Walter Markey to present ten plays by promising authors. Duel in London by Victor Clement and Milton Subotsky... Lighthouse Players present George Oppenheimer's Here Today April 28-30...Juno and Paycock to run through May 8 at Greenwich Mews ...Doric Riegen's I Believe in Rubble opens at Players Studio, 263 W 86, April 26, first presentation of group which will present modern and classic verse drama.

Billy Budd will be present May 3 at Rooftop Theatre, East Houston St and Second Ave by Masquers Theatre with Bill McCarthy in title role...Playmakers Company will present Andrew Boracci's Baccinalo next at Provincetown...Shakespearewrights will alternate Merchant of Venice and Twelfth Night weekly. ...Broadway Chapel Players production of In April Once will be presented at Brick Church, East Orange, May 11, and continues at Broadway Congregational Church Sundays at 5 PM through May 8.

4th St Playhouse announces five productions next season : Macbeth, Six Characters in Search of An Author, The Living Corpse, and An Italian Straw Hat...Moby Dick, the fourth and final "Sideshow" program of Phoenix will be presented April 25 with Morris Carnovsky, David Lewis and others...Raimonda Orselli replaced Rhoda Kerns in Shoestring Revue...Columbia Players present When In Rome 1955 Variety Show Apr 27-30.

Sky High revue at Open Door, 55 West 3, okayed by D.H. Women's Wear, who billed it as unpretentious entertainment presented by a talented group of youngsters.

THEATRE

RECORD

COMMENTS

"The Art of Ruth Draper" Vol 1(Victor) recommended by Wilson, Times, as ideally suited for the phonograph presenting excellent example of actress' unique craft.

BOOK

COMMENTS

"Memories" by Ethel Barrymore published by Harper and Brothers highly rated by two drama critics turned book-reviewers. Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Clurman, in Times, Latter approved it as more of a deserved curtain call than a biography, while former recommended it minus complaints. Down, Variety, on the other hand panned it as an unimportant boook by a most important lady of stage and screen. Coming at the climax of a distinguished career, the book is a major disappointment, he concluded.

THEATRE

TV

COMMENTS

"Stage Door" production of CBS TV Best of Broadway approved by Chan, Variety, as entertaining viewing, though more than slightly on the corny side. Handsome production and excellent cast. Rhonda Fleming and Diana Lynn were listed as excellent.

THEATRE

OUT OF

TOWN

Damn Yankee, Fifth Season and Pajama Tops in Boston...Tea and Sympathy, King and I, The Rainmaker, and Tender Trap in Chicago, Dear Charles, Cain Mutiny Court Martial, and Anniversary Waltz in Los Angeles...Oh Men, Oh Women, Teahouse of August Moon in Sanfrancisco...The Honeys, Seven Year Itch in Washington, D.C...Pajama Game in Columbus...Solid Gold Cadillac in Detroit... Seventh Heaven in New Haven.